

Department of State

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FROM: BELGRADE

Info

T0: Secretary of State

NO: 586, OCTOBER 23, 9 AM

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ACTION DEPARTMENT 586, INFORMATION SARAJEVO, ZAGREB UNNUMBERED.

VISITED PRESIDENT TITO 2345 BELGRADE TIME WITH DRAFT OF
PRESIDENT'S SPEECH. I WENT OVER WITH HIM CAREFULLY ALL
POINTS OF ADDRESS STRESSING PARTICULARLY SEVEN INITIAL
STEPS TO BE TAKEN AT PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S DIRECTION IN
ORDER TO COUNTER CUBAN THREAT. DURING MY PRESENTATION TITO
INTERRUPTED ONLY ONCE WITH ABRUPT QUESTION CONCERNING PROOF
IN POSSESSION OF US MILITARY BUILD-UP WAS OF OFFENSIVE
NATURE. I REPLIED DETAILED INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN WASHINGTON
AND WOULD BE GIVEN TO AMBASSADORS ACCREDITED THERE.

AT CONCLUSION OF PRESENTATION TITO SAID HE UNDERSTOOD BACKGROUND OF CUBAN ISSUE AS WELL AS US CONCERN AT RECENT EVENTS. HIS IMMEDIATE REACTION WAS TO QUESTION ONLY TIMING OF US QUARANTINE. WHY DID US ACT IN SUCH "DRAMATISH" FASHION BEFORE SUBMITTING CASE TO NEGOTIATION? OUR PROPOSED ACTION IN OAS AND UN EXCELLENT AND UNDERSTANDABLE BUT "HASTY" US ACTION RE QUARANTINE BEFORE NEGOTIATIONS TRIED HARDLY WOULD COMMEND ITSELF TO WORLD OPINION.

I REPLIED THAT GRAVITY OF US ACTION EXPLICABLE ON TWO COUNTS: FIRSTLY, THERE COULD BE NO GUARANTEE AGGRESSIVE BUILD-UP IN CUBA BY RUSSIANS WOULD HALT DURING NEGOTIATIONS; SECONDLY, RUSSIANS HAVE FORFEITED TRUST RE CUBA THROUGH EARLY INSISTENCE THAT ITS AID GIVEN FOR PURELY DEFENSIVE PURPOSES. TITO ACCEPTED THIS STATEMENT WITHOUT COMMENT

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BUT REITERATED HOPE FOR SATISFACTORY UN ACTION. HE SUGGESTED WORLD BODY MIGHT FIND IT EXPEDIENT TO SEND FACT-FINDING MISSION TO CUBA TO SOLVE "UNHAPPY" SITUATION THERE. IN CONCLUSION HE STATED FOR MOMENT HE WITH-HOLDING FURTHER JUDGMENT BUT INDICATED HE WOULD CONSULT WITH HIS ADVISERS TOMORROW WHEN FINAL TEXT OF SPEECH AVAILABLE.]

THROUGHOUT TITO APPEARED WITHOUT RANCOR. AT NO TIME DID HE ATTEMPT TO DEFEND RUSSIANS. REGARDLESS OF POSSIBLE CHANGE IN REACTION TOMORROW UPON FURTHER REFLECTION, TONIGHT HE SEEMED AMIABLE AND DETACHED ALMOST TO POINT OF DIS-INTEREST.

ONLY OTHER PERSON PARTICIPATING IN INTERVIEW WAS PRESIDENT'S SECRETARY GENERAL CRNOBRNJA WHO OCCASIONALLY INTERPRETED ALTHOUGH MOST OF CONVERSATION WAS IN ENGLISH.

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